

RUNNING FOR OFFICE IN THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE

Presented by: City of Milwaukee Election Commission

The process of running for office in the City of Milwaukee is guided by Wisconsin Election and Campaign Laws, chapters 5-12 and the Government Accountability Board (GAB). An important role of the Milwaukee Election Commission is to provide information and assistance to any person interested in running for public office in the City of Milwaukee.

However, as per Wisconsin state law: **any person interested in running for office has the burden and responsibility of understanding and complying with candidate filing and campaign finance reporting requirements.** Most information on candidate registration filing requirements, including nomination papers, can be found in chapter 8 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. Comprehensive instructions on completing a campaign finance report can be found in the GAB's instructional booklet (available at <http://gab.wi.gov> or through the Election Commission) or in chapter 11 of the Wisconsin State Statutes.

State law and local ordinances require the completion of several forms when running for office. Each of these forms can be downloaded and printed from the City of Milwaukee Election Commission's website www.milwaukee.gov/election or a packet of these forms and instructions may be purchased from the Election Commission for \$25.00.

Step 1: File Campaign Registration Statement (Form GAB-1)

Candidates are prohibited from campaign fundraising or incurring campaign expenses until this form has been filed with the Election Commission. This form requires you to:

- Identify the political office you will be pursuing.
- List the bank information for your campaign finance account. *You must open and maintain a separate campaign finance account from your personal finances. You cannot co-mingle personal funds and campaign funds unless you have selected a filing exemption (see instructions for declaring exemption on the GAB-1).*
- Provide the name and contact information of your campaign treasurer. If you already have a campaign account either as an elected official or from previously running for office, you should use this account as Wisconsin law allows candidates to maintain only one campaign finance account. *You may act as your own campaign treasurer. However, due to the complexity of completing the forms correctly, the Election Commission encourages you to select someone for this position that has a good familiarity with Excel spreadsheets and tracking expenses and revenue.*

Any changes to the information submitted on Form GAB-1 must be reported through the submission of an amended form within 10 days of the change.

Step 2: Collect your Nomination Signatures.

- You may begin collecting signatures for your Nomination Papers no earlier than December 1 preceding the election and shall be filed in the Election Commission no later than 5:00 PM the first Tuesday in January, or the next day if Tuesday is a holiday. If the first Tuesday is a holiday, the circulation of nomination papers must end on January 1st. Signatures collected after January 1st will not be accepted.
- Read all instructions relating to the distribution of nomination papers to ensure that each page of your nomination signatures meets circulating requirements. All nomination signatures are reviewed by the Election Commission and may be challenged by the public, including other candidates. If a signer's address is illegible or invalid, or the person resides outside of the area represented by the officeholder, the signature will be disqualified. *While it is not required, you are encouraged to collect at least 25% more signatures more than the minimum requirement. You are also encouraged to use the "Where Do I Vote" program on the Election Commission's website to verify the addresses included on your nomination papers.* www.milwaukee.gov/election

Step 3: Complete the Milwaukee Ethics Board Statement of Economic Interest.

- Municipal candidates, e.g., Alderpersons, City Attorney, City Comptroller, City Treasurer and Mayor must file the Economic Interest statement no later than the first Tuesday in January. Municipal Judge candidates must file ONLY with the Government Accountability Board (per Municipal Candidate Ballot Access Checklist). Milwaukee School Board candidates are exempt from this filing requirement.

Step 4: Complete All Other Election Commission Filing Requirements.

- You are required to submit the following completed documents no later than 5:00 p.m. the first Tuesday in January preceding the election.
 - ✓ Campaign Registration Statement (GAB-1)
 - ✓ Declaration of Candidacy (GAB-162)
 - ✓ Nomination Papers submitted with sufficient valid signatures
 - ✓ Pledge to Remove Campaign Signs and Posters

- These forms are available online at the Election Commission's website or a full packet of forms can be purchased from the Election Commission in 2015.

Step 5: Certification by the Election Commission

- The Election Commission will conclude reviewing the Nomination Papers within three (3) business days from the deadline of submission. In some instances, the Election Commission may ask you to provide a corrective affidavit if errors have been made on a nomination page. ***Please make sure that you check your phone messages during this time and that you respond quickly to requests for information. Failure to respond to messages may result in a finding of insufficient signatures.***
- Members of the public, including candidates running for the same office, may submit a verified complaint challenging the validity of signatures on your Nomination Papers. The deadline to submit challenges will be within three (3) business days as well. You will be notified by phone and in writing if any challenges have been submitted. You will have three (3) calendar days, to respond to challenges. The City of Milwaukee Board of Election Commissioners will make a determination on all challenges based on information provided by the challenger and by the candidate.
- If your nomination papers are complete (there are a sufficient number of valid signatures) and all other filing requirements have been met, your nomination papers will be certified as sufficient by the Election Commission and your name will appear on the ballot. If there are not enough valid signatures on your nomination papers or you did not complete all filing requirements, your name will not appear on the ballot.
- If more than two candidates are certified for one office, all certified candidates for that office will appear on the ballot for the Spring Primary. The candidates receiving the highest and second highest number of votes in the Spring Primary will advance to the Spring Election.
- The order of candidate names on the ballot is determined through a random drawing selection process. Notice of the drawing is provided to all candidates and the public is invited to witness this process.
- NOTE: You may not remove your name from the ballot once your nomination papers have been certified.

Step 6: Submit Campaign Finance Reports

- Unless you have declared exemption (you do not expect to raise or spend an aggregate of over \$1,000 on your campaign or receive a contribution of more than \$100 from any one person), you are required to file campaign finance reports. You will receive a report for completion in the mail prior to each filing due date as indicated on the Campaign Finance Report filing schedule. Campaign finance schedules and reporting requirements can be complex and require significant attention to detail and an ability to learn and understand reporting instructions. You are encouraged to select a campaign treasurer that is reliable and organized. All reports must be complete, accurate and meet full public disclosure requirements.